

IN THE CLAIMS

In this Response, Claims 1, 4, 5, 7, 27 and 29-32 have been amended.

1. (currently amended) An apparatus to support a stent during a process of coating the stent with a coating substance, comprising a first element to make contact with one side of a stent, and a second element to make contact with another side of the stent, wherein the first element and/or the second element have a shape that prevents contact of the stent with a third element extending within the stent between the first and second elements, wherein the first and/or second element includes a plurality of pores disposed on a surface of the first and/or second element, the pores capable of receiving a coating substance during a coating process, and wherein the pores have an open end and a closed end so as to provide a closed pore system on the surface of the first and/or second element.

2. (previously presented) The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein the pores have a diameter from about 0.2 microns to about 50 microns.

Claim 3 (canceled).

4. (previously presented) The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein the first and/or second element is made from a metallic material.

5. (previously presented) The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein the first and/or second element is made from a polymeric material.

6. (previously presented) The apparatus of Claim 5, wherein the polymeric material is selected from the group consisting of regenerated cellulose, cellulose acetate, polyacetal, polyetheretherketone, polyesters, highly hydrolyzed polyvinyl alcohol, nylon, polyphenylenesulfide, polyethylene, polyethylene terephthalate, polypropylene, and combinations thereof.

Application No. 10/662,223

7. (previously presented) The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein the first and/or second element is made from a ceramic material.

Claims 8-24 (canceled).

25. (previously presented) The apparatus of Claim 4, wherein the metallic material is selected from the group consisting of stainless steel, titanium, tantalum, niobium, zirconium, hafnium, and cobalt chromium alloys.

26. (previously presented) The apparatus of Claim 7, wherein the ceramic material is selected from the group consisting of zirconia, silica, glass, sintered calcium phosphates, calcium sulfate, and titanium dioxide.

27. (currently amended) A mounting assembly to support a stent during the application of a coating composition onto the stent, comprising a first element to make contact with one side of a stent, and a second element to make contact with another side of the stent, wherein the first element and/or the second element have a shape that prevents contact of the stent with a third element extending within the stent between the first and second elements, wherein the first and/or second element includes a layer to absorb a coating composition that comes into contact with the layer during an application process.

28. (previously presented) The mounting assembly of Claim 27, wherein the layer is a sponge.

29. (previously presented) The mounting assembly of Claim 27, wherein the first and/or second element is made from a metallic material, a polymeric material or a ceramic material.

30. (previously presented) The mounting assembly of Claim 27, wherein the first and/or second element has a conical shape.

Application No. 10/662,223

31. (currently amended) A support assembly to support a stent during a process of coating the stent with a composition, comprising a first element to make contact with one side of a stent, and a second element to make contact with another side of the stent, wherein the first element and/or the second element have a shape that prevents contact of the stent with a third element extending within the stent between the first and second elements, wherein the first and/or second element includes an absorbing layer disposed on the surface of the first and/or second element for at least partially absorbing some of the composition that comes into contact with the absorbing layer.

32. (currently amended) A support assembly to support a stent during a process of coating the stent with a composition, comprising a first element to make contact with one side of a stent, and a second element to make contact with another side of the stent, wherein the first element and/or the second element have a shape that prevents contact of the stent with a third element extending within the stent between the first and second elements, wherein the first and/or second element is made from an absorbent material for at least partially absorbing some of the composition that comes into contact with the first and/or second element.